THE MINISTER OF ENERGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN): (a) and (b) The construction of an airport at Vagaikulam in Chidambaranar District has commenced from the 16th of January, 1990.

(c) No, Sir.

Control of rabies

1562. SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 30,000 people in the country die every year due to rabies;

(b) whether this can be attributed to the large number of stray dogs in the country;

(c) if so, what effective steps at national level are being taken to combat the menace;

(d) whether Government propose to administer anti-rabies vaccines free of cost to the people in the country as a preventive measure; and

(e) if the answer to part (d) above be in the negative, what alternative steps Government propose to take combat this menace?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY): (a) and (b) Although no exact figures of the incidence of rabies are available, it is estimated that nearly 25,000 deaths occur in the country due to rabies every year out of which 96 per cent are due to dog bits including stray dogs.

(c) The Ministry of Agriculture has launched a National Cenine Rabies Control Programme during VI Five Year Plan. Under this programme 30 rabies control units have been set up in different States to supplement the control activities undertaken by State Governments and local civic bodies.

(d) The anti rabies vaccine nervous tissue vaccine) is provided free of cost in Government Hospitals.

(e) Does not arise.

Setting up of Ophthalmic Centres

1563. SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to effect improvement in the ophthalmic facilities at Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, New Delhi and raise it to the level of facilities available in SAARC countries;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and what is the amount likely to be spent thereon;

(c) whether there are some more ophthalmic centres in the country;

(d) if so, what are the Statewise details thereof;

(e) whether Government propose to set up ophthalmic centres in Uttar Pradesh also of the level of Dr. Rjaendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences for the convenience of local patients; and

(f) if so, what are the details thereof and if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY): (a) and (b) Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, New Delhi is a premier Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences at the National level. No information about the status of ophthalmic facilities available in SAARC countries is available with us. Under National Programme for Control of Blindness a sum of Rs. 3.57 crores had been provided to the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for construction of building and also for the purchase of sophisticated ophthalmic equipments. Besides Rs. 12 lakhs is proposed to be given to Dr. R. P. Centre during 1989-90 for establishing a Central Ophthalmic Instrument repair workshop.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) To cater to the needs of the people of different zones, following Regional